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Backyard Chronicles 32

Photo Credit: Lillian Lane



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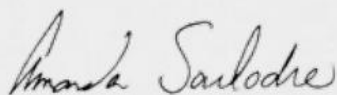
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COVER: This is what happens when you blend a love of family, race cars and motorcycles with the talents of a movie set and props designer, a graphic artist, and a whiz at metal fabrication and custom painting. Photo by Lillian Lane.

HOME front

With the cool windy days of winter receding and a sunny Saskatoon spring ahead, I am excited to share this issue with you! As we kick into full spring mode, this issue of HOME will both amaze and inspire you with new ideas and fascinating stories. With one decade of publishing in the rear-view mirror we thank you, our readers, for your wonderful feedback and support. We remain committed to the idea that every home has a story to tell and we are proud to be the ones to tell it.

Happy reading,



AMANDA SOULODRE
OWNER & PUBLISHER



HOME

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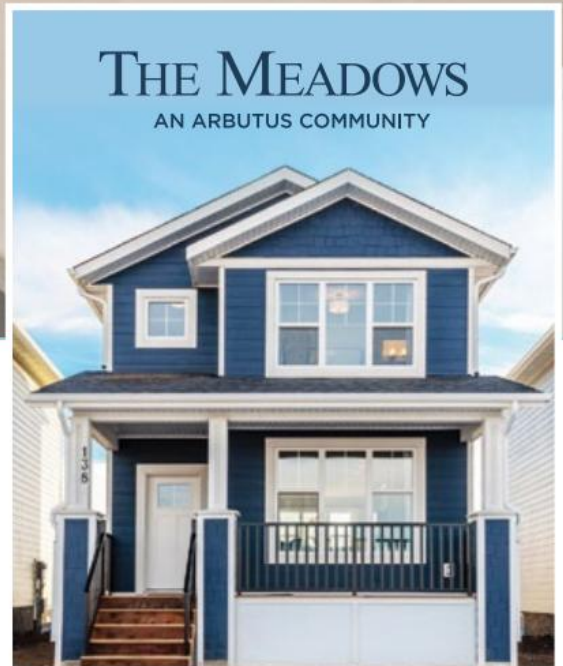
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Meet the HOME Team

SPOTLIGHT: OUR EDITOR



Photo Credit: Heather Fritz

Karin Melberg Schwier

In this, our spring issue, we feature our editor Karin Melberg Schwier.

Karin is a full-time freelance writer and editor. She began writing for *Saskatoon HOME* in 2008 and we appointed her as editor in 2013. That year, Karin received a Saskatoon YWCA Women of Distinction Award in the Arts and Culture category. A versatile writer, she approaches every assignment knowing there's a worthwhile story to be told, and puts people at ease with respect, professionalism and

good humour. In even the driest subject matter, she finds the human heart to create an interesting, readable story. Her favourite HOME stories celebrate local characters like two Ukrainian baba sisters who, at 90 and 96, still tended prolific backyard gardens. Or Saskatoon citizens of different ethnic backgrounds who keep their traditions alive, or people who renovate and discover hidden treasures buried in the walls of their homes.

To Karin, planning each issue of HOME presents an

intriguing array of new story possibilities that will inform and entertain readers.

Karin has published eight books with a focus on the lives of people with intellectual disabilities (one translated into German and Italian), and she has edited several others. She's produced many freelance articles and edited works. She's been busy with writing a novel, and her photographs and illustrations have appeared in publications and private collections. Karin lives

in Saskatoon with her husband Richard, a retired professor of education, and son Jim, a 25-year veteran volunteer at the YMCA. They have two other children: son Ben, daughter-in-law Julia and two-year-old granddaughter Pearl, and daughter Erin, son-in-law Michael, and 12-year-old grandson Alexander. And speaking of versatile, did we mention she can milk cows, has been known to shear sheep, and makes killer garlic dill pickles? 🥒

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We love to see and share your home renovation projects or design ideas. Tag us in your social posts and you may be featured in our next issue!



*A before and after kitchen reno.
Thanks Amy Price for the photos and to her husband Trevor Schiller for doing all the work!*

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COMMUNITY GARDENS

NOURISHING CITY-WIDE CONNECTIONS



KRISTA MARTENS



KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER

We live in a world where there is no lack of connectivity. Phones are always in our pockets, social media platforms at the ready. But there is an increasing worry that we lack meaningful interactions or at least we see erosions to the bonds with our families, our neighbourhoods, and to the land.

Community gardens are one way to assuage those concerns. They remind

us of our rich agricultural heritage. They teach us how to be proud stewards of the land, and help us find a more significant connection with our communities.

Planting a seed in freshly tilled garden soil brings immense joy. Research suggests such hands-on contact with our natural world promotes good mental health and emotional well-being. Many gardeners

will tell you there is nothing more satisfying than growing your own food. It takes commitment, patience, and sweat equity to build a successful garden.

That Sense of Community

As the population of Saskatoon expands, new neighbourhoods form. As immigration increases, the need for food security gradually grows as well. Families in all communities need access

to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for them to maintain an active healthy lifestyle.

Sandra Schweder, Community Garden Coordinator with CHEP Good Food, is passionate about food security. CHEP is an agency that offers a variety of programs for schools, families and individuals in Saskatoon. "Part of our mandate at CHEP is around the topic of food security, but we can't forget we also need to be culturally



responsive. We have many new immigrant families who are seeking out appropriate food like Halal and Kosher. We need to consider all of this when we approach food security."

When *Saskatoon HOME* first told a story about community gardens in our Summer 2013 issue, there were 22 community gardens across Saskatoon. Today, there are 52 scattered throughout numerous parks and green spaces. Land around schools, churches, and fire halls can also accommodate community gardens.

"Many of the immigrant families moving to Saskatoon are well versed in food production being farmers themselves, so they naturally have been seeking out a place to grow gardens," says Sandra. "We are also seeing the desire for people to know where their food comes from. For some, it is for the social element, a way to connect to neighbours they would not know otherwise. We are growing more than just food," she adds. "We are growing communities."

A Reclaimed Land Opportunity

CHEP Good Food is teaching sustainable gardening at the Askly Garden near Station 20 West on Saskatoon's west side. "It is an urban agriculture internship that

teaches sustainable gardening. Interns grow, harvest and sell the produce every year," says Sandra. Participants focus on five areas: growing food & food skills, enhancing cultural connections, promoting environmental sustainability, creating a social enterprise, and engaging youth.

The unique garden is located on reclaimed 'brownfield', a former industrial site. It produces a variety of vegetables, flowers and herbs every year.

The Rise of the School Community Garden

Howard Coad School is nestled in the heart of Saskatoon's Mount Royal neighbourhood. It is a diverse multicultural school that consists of one-third immigrant families, one-third Indigenous families, and one-third Caucasian families.

Many of the families who expressed interest in the garden had vast experience and knowledge in growing, tending and harvesting but they didn't have space at home.

"It has become a place of belonging and connection no matter the cultural backgrounds," says Shannon deBakker, Howard Coad School Community Coordinator. "Language isn't a barrier. It is the act of working ➤

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with their hands that bridge the gaps in communication and brings such joy," says Shannon.

Howard Coad School participated as a partner in a plot at Mount Royal Community Garden in 2017 where school families took part in caring for the plot. Teachers incorporated gardening into their classroom curriculum. That included everything from starting the seeds in the classroom to designing art that depicted the growing process.

Growing Connections

Based on the successful experience, they started a new garden plot in the front of the school in 2018. This garden space was intended to be a teachable space for students and families. "We all came together to create the space and tend the land. It was amazing how everyone had such a fabulous time," says Howard Coad School Vice Principal Amy Basaraba. "We had a few lead parents who helped in both the planting choices and maintaining the

garden over the growing season. It truly was a parent partnership."

To support their garden, Howard Coad School received two grants, one from the Saskatoon Public School Board for bridging diversity in communities. The other from Mosaic, the phosphate producer, helping the school in agricultural learning. Howard Coad School was able to create the only Grade 5-8 Literacy Camp in Saskatoon. The students worked in the garden and came to understand

the connection between agriculture and food.

Howard Coad School teachers and parents are busy planning their garden plot for this year with the focus on land-based teaching opportunities. This approach is prominent in many classrooms. It brings about better connections with Indigenous culture and encourages students to have a broader world view of themselves and their place in the world. (H)

Krista Martens



Photo Credit: Howard Coad School



COMMUNITY GARDENS IN THE CITY

Visit www.chep.org/program/community-gardens/ for a complete list of Saskatoon community gardens. For information about starting a community garden on municipally-owned land, find the application at www.saskatoon.ca/services-residents/housing-property/yard-garden/gardens



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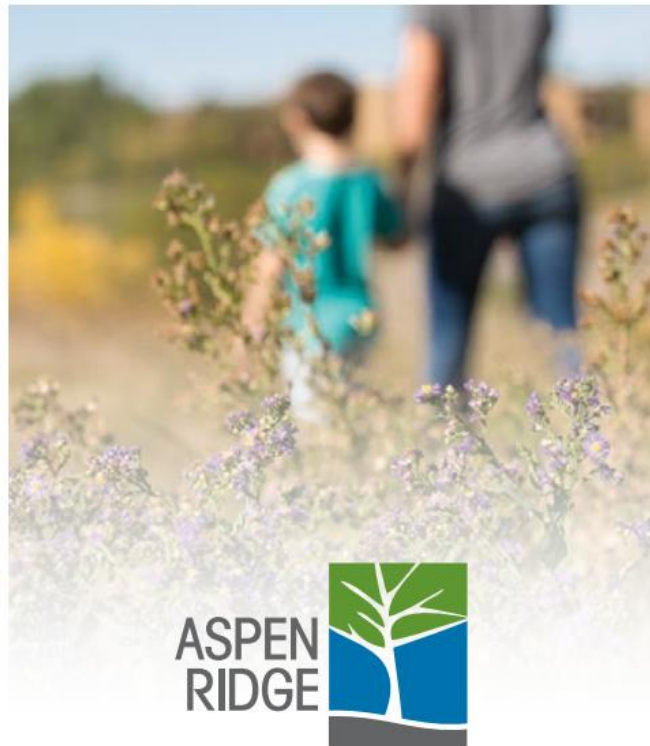
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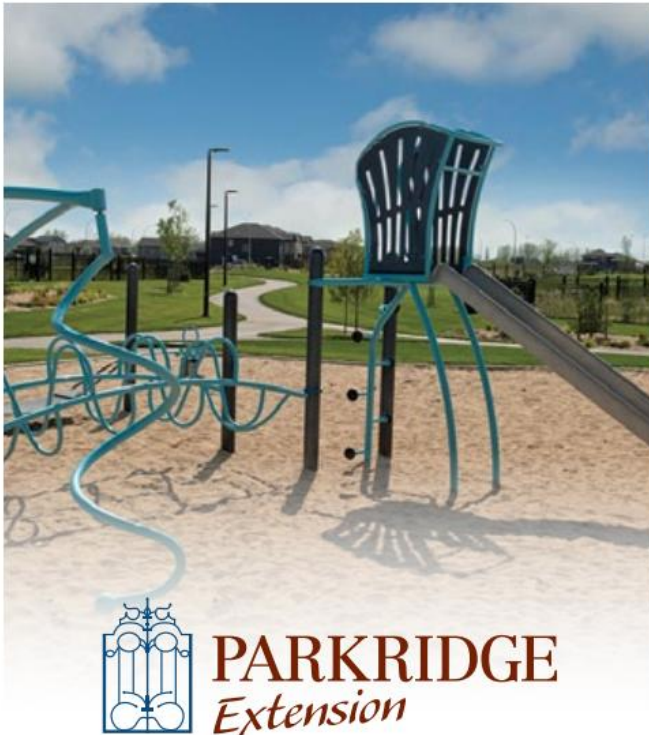
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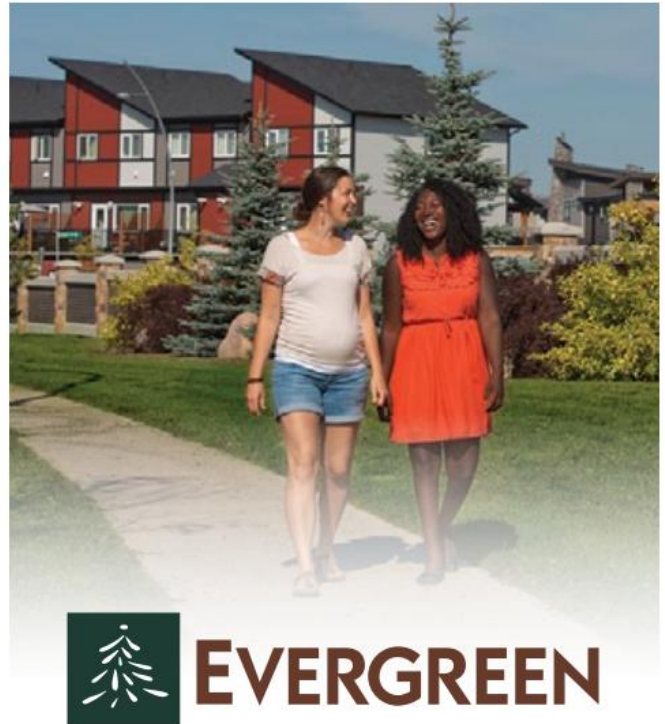
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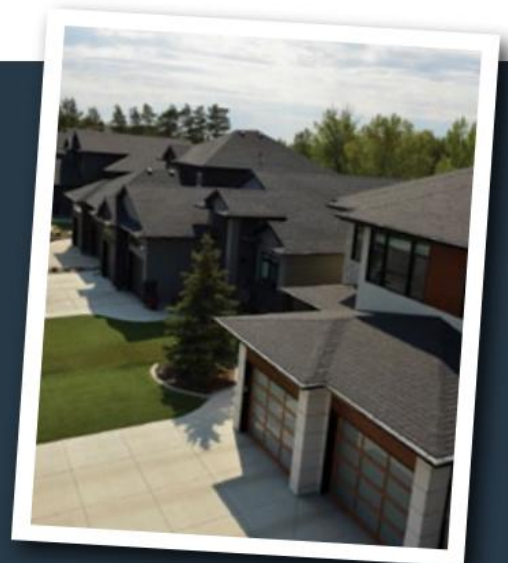
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Visitors to Kerry Neufeld's garage could be forgiven for thinking they've stumbled upon a subterranean, high-tech, Hollywood movie set. The detached garage's basement—yes, you read that correctly, the garage has its own lower level—feels like a

personalized 1,800-square-foot filmic time capsule.

Intricately detailed building facades line the walls, thanks to the talents of carpenter Lyle Barwick. Lyle spent 26 years in Vancouver building TV and movie sets in his role as a scenic carpenter.

"I would work 12-hour days building movie sets and then go spend six hours at night building props," he says. His first job in Hollywood North was building sets for a film called *Beyond the Stars*, starring Martin Sheen and Sharon Stone.

"I've built everything from airplanes to submarines. I worked on the *Stargate* series for about 12 years and every other motion picture you can imagine. So this kind of stuff comes easy for me," says Lyle.



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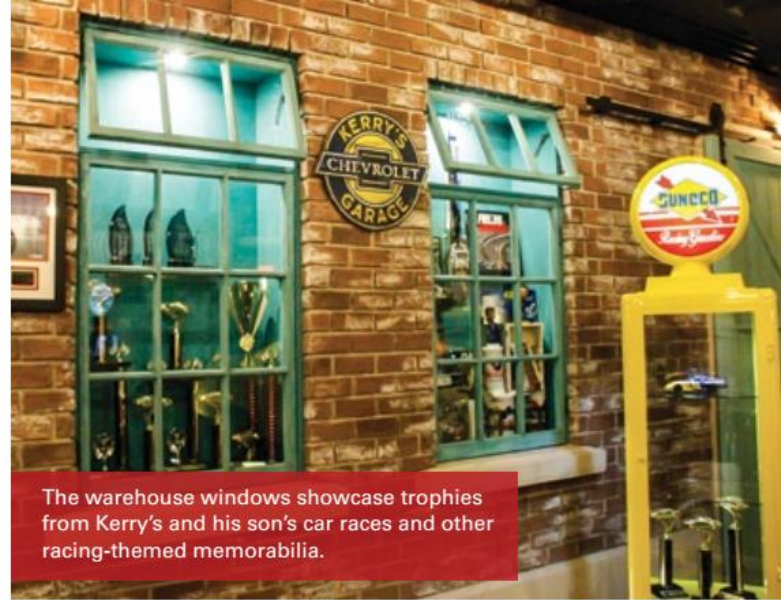
 **JULIE BARNES**  **LILLIAN LANE**

Collaborative Creativity

He's quick to give credit to the other creatives who collaborated on the design of Kerry's cinematic sub-garage, including Bruce Williams of UFL Graffix, who handled the graphic design details, and Byron Thiessen of Legacy

Autocraft, who was tasked with a lot of the metal fabrication and painting.

"It's very much a collaborative effort between the three of us," says Lyle. "We all love each other's opinions. If somebody gets an idea, then we take it to the other two guys and ➤



say, 'What do you think?'"

Nearly every square inch was handcrafted in this highly detailed, personalized space. Even the method of entry is unique. Visitors don't descend via a staircase, but rather via a scissor lift that was restructured to fit the garage's dimensions. If functions as an elevator to lower visitors into the space.

The Wheels Fall Off

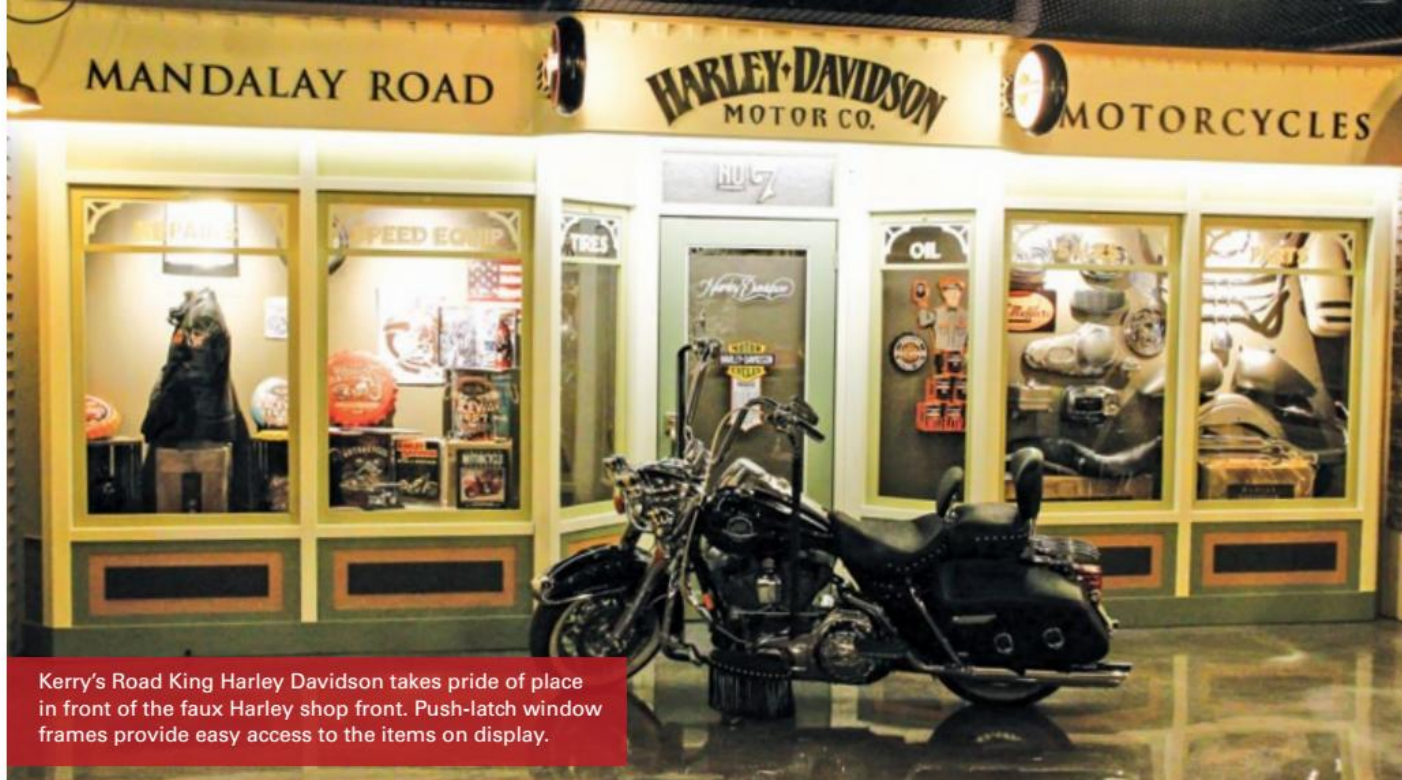
"We didn't plan it like this," says Kerry. "Originally, I just built the basement because I race cars and we were just going to work on the race cars down here." Hence, the

installation of the car lift. It sits so flush with the basement floor that from a distance you don't even realize it's there. It just seems as though Kerry's bright yellow muscle car has appeared out of thin air.

Kerry eventually grew tired of the bare walls, which led Byron to introduce him to Lyle.

"We started with the warehouse," says Kerry, referring to the faux-brick building façade that houses the mechanical room and operations for the car lift behind a set of teal barn doors. Backlit windows showcase Kerry's and his





son's racing trophies and memorabilia, while glowing "basement" windows exemplify the incredible attention to detail that infuses the entire space. The brickwork looks

surprisingly real, but it's actually 1-inch-thick polyurethane foam painted to look like brick, says Lyle. It was sourced from Alberta, but still required some TLC. "I had to break it all down and

then rebuild it because we couldn't use it in the form it was in," says Lyle. "I had to make it work for me."

The warehouse was going to be the end of it, until Kerry

invited Bruce, Lyle and Byron back over. They decided to add the Harley Davidson façade, and "then the wheels fell off," says Byron with a laugh.

"Once the Harley wall ➤

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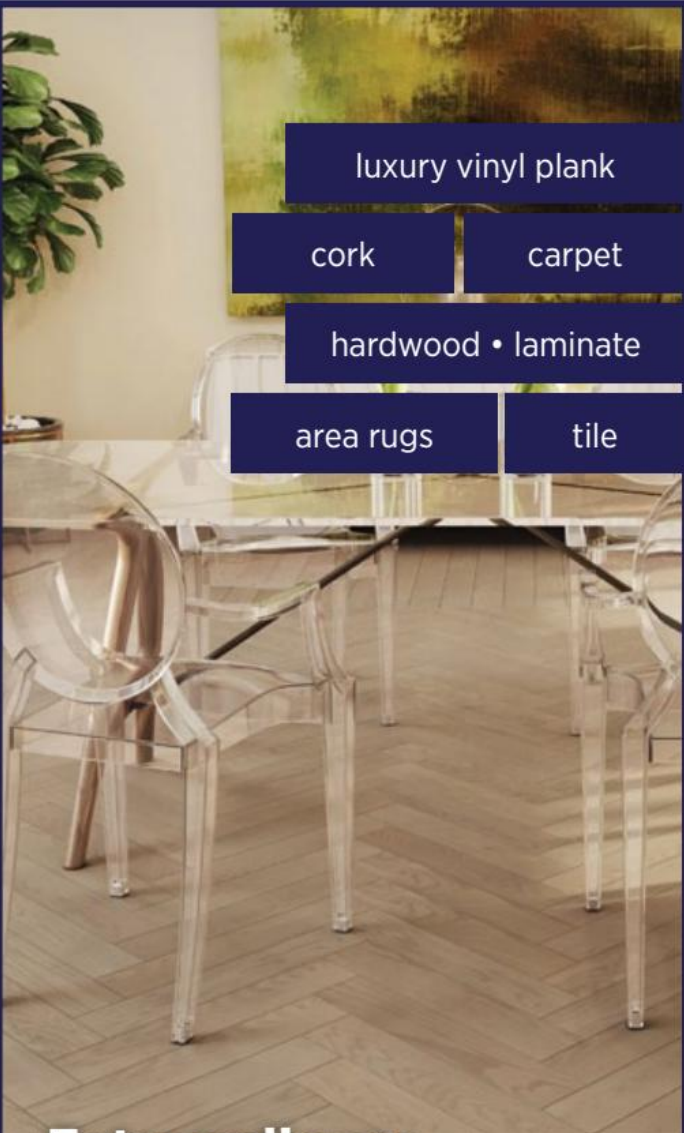
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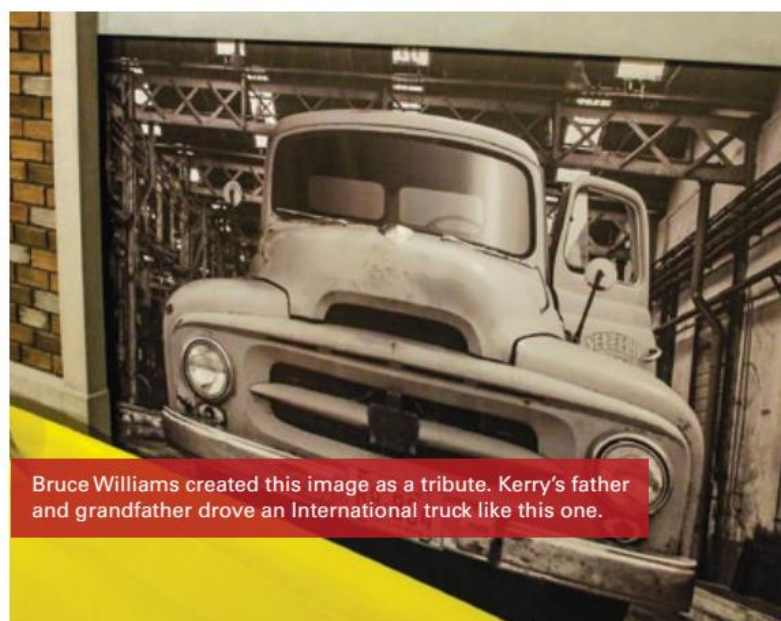
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A Ford truck transmission has been repurposed as a bathroom sink.



A keystone perched between the faux garage doors is inscribed with NBM, the acronym for Kerry's family business, Neufeld Building Movers.



Bruce Williams created this image as a tribute. Kerry's father and grandfather drove an International truck like this one.



Black and white photos of houses Kerry, his father and grandfather have transported form a collage behind the custom cabinetry hand-crafted by Lyle.



The door on the diner opens to reveal a red fridge that complements the retro aesthetic.

was done," Kerry adds, "I knew it wasn't going to be a race car workshop anymore."

The Harley Davidson wall pays tribute to Kerry's interest in motorcycles. As with the warehouse, the Harley wall's backlit display cases are brimming with memorabilia, antiques and motorcycle parts. Kerry's Road King Harley Davidson takes pride of place in front of the faux shop front.

Touching on Family History

The next project was the mural wall, just one of many personal touches in the space. It's a photo taken by Lyle of Kerry and his son racing at a local track. Lyle had the photo blown up to fit the wall and Dave Smith from The SignSmith printed it on vinyl with an adhesive backing.

The mural wall is still a work in progress, says Lyle.

He's currently sorting through thousands of Kerry's photos to create photo collages that will overlay parts of the mural. It's a task he's familiar with, having spent countless hours creating a touching photographic tribute to the business Kerry's grandfather started in 1951, Neufeld Building Movers, which Kerry still runs today. Black and white photos of some of the homes Kerry, his father

and grandfather have moved over the years form a collage that lines the wall adjacent to the mural. Like the mural, it was printed on vinyl and designed to fit the available wall space between the custom cabinetry built by Lyle.

Further along this wall is the nostalgia-inducing diner façade. The door opens to reveal, fittingly, a red retro fridge stocked with ➤

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The coffee table is comprised of two wheels from Kerry's son's #51 race car and sits on a dolly so it can easily glide throughout the space. The floors are a two-part epoxy with a gray metallic mixed in. Before the epoxy completely set, Totally Blasted Ltd. used a leaf blower to create a distinctive visual effect.

beverages. A menu taped to the window was created from scratch, complete with a coffee stain ring in the bottom corner.

At the far end of the room, behind the car lift, is another nod to the family business. More faux brick outlines what appears to be two garage bays although these are also façades. Kerry's company's logo adorns one of the "garage doors" and Bruce got creative with the other one. He found a photo of an antique International truck, like Kerry's grandfather and father used to drive, and worked his Photoshop magic on it. He added "Neufeld Building Movers" to the truck's door and inserted a background image of a warehouse setting. Between the faux-garage doors is a keystone inscribed with "NBM" (Kerry's company's acronym) and its founding year.

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Entertaining Ease

What was originally envisioned as a racecar workshop is now a recreational space, says Kerry. He hosts parties for staff and friends, and uses the space for family hangouts. In the centre of the room sits a large sectional, which faces a large drop-down screen for TV and movie nights. High-top tables, stools and a popcorn maker complement the diner with their retro aesthetic. Audio wasn't overlooked either. "The sound system Kerry has here is incredible," says Lyle.

A wall-mounted touchscreen works as the command centre, allowing Kerry to control the room's audio and lighting. Lyle built a cover for it, turning it into a plaque dedicated to Kerry's late father.

"Probably one of my favourite pieces is that ➤



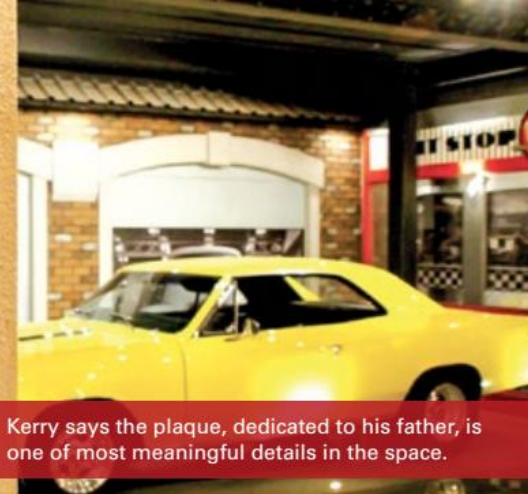
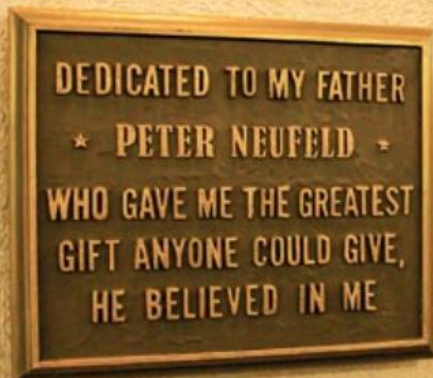
The leather sectional faces a drop-down screen for TV and movie nights.



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Kerry says the plaque, dedicated to his father, is one of most meaningful details in the space.



Kerry's command centre sits discreetly behind the plaque. He can control features such as the lighting and audio from the touch screen panel.

plaque," says Kerry. "That's one of the most meaningful things, obviously. Lyle surprised me with that. I just like the personalization."

Kerry says he's thankful to Lyle, Byron and Bruce for their vision, and sums up the space succinctly: "There's not much that's off the shelf about it."

Such imaginative projects are rare for Lyle since he moved home from Vancouver, and he loved the creative opportunities this one presented. "The nice thing is when you have a client like Kerry who is so open to everything, he gives you free rein. There's nothing we showed him that he did not like."

Luckily, that atmospheric magic Lyle has created doesn't have to end just yet—there's still 1,800-square-feet above on the ground floor to design and build.

He's just getting started. (H)

Julie Barnes

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Color of
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16-1546

COLOUR OF THE YEAR 2019

LIVING CORAL



KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER



PANTONE COLOR INSTITUTE

Close your eyes. Think of a calming, nurturing coral reef, an orange hue with warm golden undertones and a hint of pink, gently swaying with deep blue tides, sustaining an array of sea life emblazoned in a kaleidoscope of bright colours.

Pantone, the provider of professional colour standards

and digital solutions for the design industry, announced Living Coral as the colour to be seen everywhere in the New Year from beauty products to hotel décor. According to the big guns at the Pantone Color Institute who are involved in the annual selection, this year's colour "represents the fusion of modern life. Living Coral is a

nurturing color that appears in our natural surroundings and at the same time, displays a lively presence within social media." That's a big responsibility for a coral reef.

Colour is Big Business

The choice is said to influence product development and purchasing decisions in many

industries, including fashion, home furnishings, decor, and industrial design, as well as product packaging, graphic design and social media.

PANTONE 16-1546 Living Coral is going to loom large in the entertainment industry and films in production, traveling art collections and the work of new artists, all areas of design,



popular travel destinations, sporting events, even food and drink. It'll make you yearn for a Tequila Sunrise.

A Heartening Reflection

"Mother Nature provides much inspiration from this glorious shade of orange that is found not only under the sea but in a gorgeously striated sunset, in our feathered friends, and certainly in tropical florals," says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of Pantone's Color Institute. She's been called an 'international colour guru.' Lee speaks annually with *Saskatoon HOME* from her office on Bainbridge Island near Seattle about what's behind the Colour of the Year selection.

"It is a color that embraces us with warmth and comfort, however given the right context, the lively hue evokes a sense of whimsy and playfulness," Lee says. ➤



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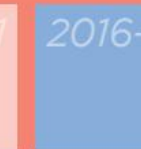
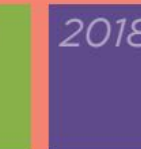
In reaction to the onslaught of digital technology and social media increasingly present in chaotic daily life, "we are seeking authentic and immersive experiences."

PANTONE 16-1546 Living Coral "emits the energizing aspects of color found in nature. In its glorious display beneath the sea, this vivifying and effervescent color nourishes our need for connection and intimacy."

Last year, Lee released her 10th book: *The Complete Color Harmony*, Pantone Edition, Rockport/Quarto Publications. For more information about Lee, her Bainbridge Island summer colour/design class, and the Color Institute, visit: www.colorexpert.com. 

Karin Melberg Schwier

PAST COLOURS OF THE YEAR

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016-1	2016-2	2017	2018
								
PANTONE® 18-2120 Honeysuckle	PANTONE® 17-1463 Tangerine Tango	PANTONE® 17-5641 Emerald	PANTONE® 18-3224 Radiant Orchid	PANTONE® 18-1438 Marsala	PANTONE® 13-1520 Rose Quartz	PANTONE® 15-3919 Serenity	PANTONE® 15-0343 Greenery	PANTONE® 18-3838 Ultra Violet



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COLOUR OF THE YEAR SUPPORTING COLOURS

The Pantone Color Institute offers 72 forecasted colours that showcase consumer desires, engage imaginations, appeal to emotions, and those that will capture the consumer's roving eye, motivating purchases for the home. The selected palettes provide "targeted colour direction" and will influence our buying choices this year.

According to the Pantone Institute, two of the highlighted palettes within the 2019 edition are Cravings and Classico.

CRAVINGS will tempt the eye as well as the taste buds with spicy reds, sweet flamingo orange and rich purples. Seductive allusions to "fetish foods" deepen the irresistible message of the palette. The neutrals of tasty butterum and cappuccino serve up a delectable warming presence, while grassy green promises a cooling respite from the heat of the surrounding shades.

CLASSICO hues are fundamental, basic, and everlasting, while also elegant and forever fashionable. This is the palette where a graceful swan white and camel-coloured tan co-exist effortlessly with deep teal, chic gray flannel, burgundy red, and caviar black. Rich gold and apricot brandy provide finishing elements to a colour language spoken worldwide, across product categories and throughout all levels of the marketplace.





CRAVINGS



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BACKYARD CHRONICLES

CAUTIONARY TALE ON DIY LANDSCAPING



KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER



LILLIAN LANE

The tumbleweeds were the last straw for Naqsh and Mae Kochar.

In 2013, they built their home in Stonebridge and loved that their back gate opens onto Howard Harding Park near Marshall Hawthorne Pond.

Blessed with good neighbours on either side who had beautiful landscaping, it was embarrassing that their own undeveloped backyard looked pretty grim. Mae

worried their young children were going to get lost in the knee-high weeds, and she was tired of looking out on what might be mistaken for as an abandoned lot.

Time to Act

"We were very aware that people had a view of our home from the playground at the park and we imagined them saying, 'oh, nice place, nice place' and then when they got

to ours, 'yikes, what happened there?'" By 2016 the couple felt it was time to tackle the yard.

"I don't know much about construction, but I knew that when you open the back door of your house, there shouldn't be a five-foot drop. We wrote down 'deck' as the first priority."

But what? And how? Naqsh (pronounced Noksh) is a professional who specializes in branding and business strategy. When Mae suggested

it was time to get their hands dirty in the yard, he felt a stab of fear.

"I'm very good at my craft, but my craft does not include building decks and landscaping, sawing and hammering and nailing things."

A Handy Mentor

Luckily, both of his neighbours offered to help, one with a wealth of experience and confidence – and a tool



The Kochars are happy with a meaningful, intimate garden for reflection.

for every job. He offered to work with Naqsh to build a solid deck, guiding him on the project. "It's one thing to build a deck if you don't know what

you're doing," says Naqsh. "It's quite another to be comfortable letting your family stand on it when you're done."

Naqsh quickly realized a

construction project was much more than getting the materials delivered and getting into it.

"You don't just buy materials, add water and stir. You have to do a decent drawing, have a plan, get your permit, measure twice – maybe more – cut, saw, and get it inspected when you're done. This is not in my wheelhouse at all. There was no hope of me building it on my own, so I was very grateful to my neighbour for all the help I could get." Because of the neighbour's skill and experience, the project was relatively inexpensive. Phase One complete.

Then came the yard.

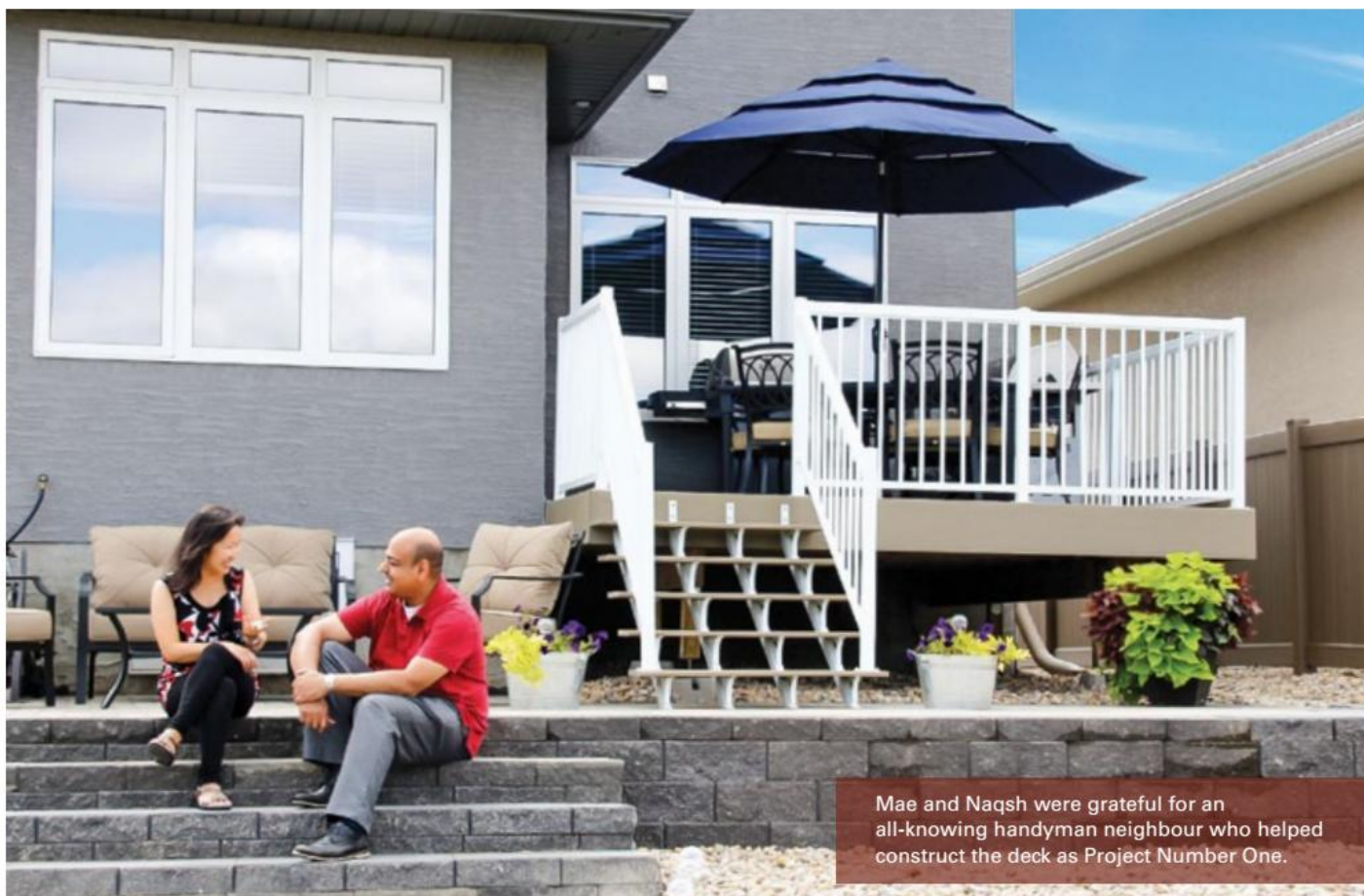
A Blank Slate

"What could possibly happen?" was Naqsh's thought at the start of the next phase, tongue firmly in cheek. "Justified because, in hindsight,

it was a great example of bad things happening when you don't know what you're doing."

They started smart. Knowing they had to have a vision, they explored the neighbourhood, taking note of layouts and design elements they liked and those they didn't. "My daytime gig is to be a strategic thinker for organizations who want to achieve their goals. Before you can get a project to the finish line, you have to envision what the finish line looks like. So we gathered ideas."

Naqsh found someone to help with the first step. "We chopped down the forest of weeds. We literally had tumbleweeds blowing around," says Naqsh. "He was experienced in this work but he did say he'd never seen so many spiders before. I was a little worried about ➤



Mae and Naqsh were grateful for an all-knowing handyman neighbour who helped construct the deck as Project Number One.

where our eight-legged friends would go once we destroyed their jungle."

The spiders moved on, but there was no more work on the yard until the following year. In 2017, Naqsh and Mae hired a freelancer who advised they put in a retaining wall as the first step toward their desired 20-foot stone patio area.

Dial Before You Dig

"So we started on the wall and the freelancer said, 'we're running into gas lines.' So I said to him, what's the plan now? Turns out there wasn't one so we didn't disturb the lines and planned around them," Naqsh explains, recalling that he was now concerned that he might blow up the neighbourhood. "When they say 'dial before you dig,' they really do mean that."

They finished the retaining

wall, but realizing the freelancer might not be up to the job of bringing their backyard vision to reality, they parted ways. Naqsh and Mae were left wondering what their next step should be.

"So many people I know talk about building a shed on the weekend, or putting in a driveway, or they built a DIY project in the back yard. If that's something you can do, great," insists Naqsh. "I know how to do many things, so I'm not embarrassed to say that landscaping is not on the top of the list." He adds that research helps, depending on the job, and you need to examine the consequences.

Watching YouTube to build a birdhouse with your kids or fix the sink drain might be just fine. "But I don't think I want to find out what happens if I accidentally hit the power line or wait to see if rainwater will



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Artificial turf was chosen for the back yard since plenty of natural grass abounds in the park just outside the gate.



Mae's priority was a place for the children to play.



flow toward the house instead of away from it. You have to honestly decide if a backyard landscaping project that will cost thousands of dollars might be too much to take on."

Naqsh maintains that part of the cost of such a job is also the time spent teaching yourself how to do it. "You can Google things, do internet searches and watch all the YouTube how-to videos you want. You have to balance the time you need to spend trying to educate yourself to do what might well be a one-off project," he says. "You have to swallow your pride a bit if the job is an intense one and admit that other people are better at the job." Weigh the risk of doing it yourself and ending up with an expensive hodgepodge that will be a testament to your disappointment (and your spouse's), he advises, or hire a professional.

Create a Plan, Adjust as Needed

Ultimately, the Kochars did both. A good professional will listen to your ideas, and work to make them happen while offering solutions that may enhance your project. Changes can add an unexpected twist, but sometimes they're meant to be.

"In the middle of this project at the end of 2017, my wife's brother who was 43 passed away on a fishing trip up north. Then in January, less than 30 days later, my mom passed away. So it was a difficult time," Naqsh explains. "We talked to our landscaper about incorporating a memorial space with a fountain into our backyard, a peaceful place to reflect and feel Mom and Dan's presence. He had good suggestions about making it flow with the rest of the design. It's of huge value to have someone help bring

your ideas together in a cohesive design."

Low Maintenance Doesn't Mean Lethargic

"It's not about being lazy," Naqsh says. "I believe it's more fun to enjoy the yard than cut the grass." Knowing that and the fact the Kochars wanted as close to zero maintenance as possible, they decided on artificial turf and plenty of rock. Allergies also played into this decision.

"If we yearn for natural grass, we just open the back gate and we're in a city-maintained park. And I don't have to mow that."

Know When to Throw in the Towel

The yard project was completed in August 2018 "so we haven't had a full summer to enjoy it, but we're very happy with how it turned out.

I don't think there's anything we regret doing, including making the decision to not do the landscaping ourselves."

Mae got her wish for space for the children to play. Naqsh got his big stone patio, "my baby." Two barbeques and comfortable furniture makes an inviting extended living and entertaining space.

"In 2017 when we started, we thought what could possibly go wrong?" remembers Naqsh. "We got that wall put up, and then it became a point of frustration. Some landscapers we called even suggested ripping out the wall and starting over. You have to know what order things need to happen and if you don't know, maybe that's a job for someone else." (G)

Karin Melberg Schwier

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KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER



CHRISTOPH NUESCH

When a foundation is shot or a homeowner wants more livable basement space under an old home, many people shake their heads at the idea of hoisting the house to fix what lies beneath. 'Too much money, too much work,' they say. 'You're better off just tearing it down or moving. It's not worth it.' But for Ribbit Homes contractor Christoph Nuesch and Nutana homeowners Juliet

Sarjeant and Mike McKague, there are more layers to a home's value to consider.

"We absolutely love this neighbourhood," says Juliet. "In fact, we lived three doors down. Bill Robertson and Mary Maxwell invited us over for a Canada Day come and go in 2004." Mike had a peek inside and told Bill to call if he ever wanted to sell. On Canada Day 2005, Juliet and Mike, with

one child and another on the way, moved in.

"We live on one of the best blocks in the city," says Mike. "We have a beautiful back yard, an easy walk to work, to Broadway, just about everything we need. One of the things we didn't realize 13 years ago was that we would eventually have teenagers. Our main motivation was to accommodate the evolution

of our family." The 1929 foundation was in bad shape, so it was crunch time on the decision to move, do an infill or get the house sitting pretty.

Christoph, whose Swiss ancestors built, then lived in homes now hundreds of years old, says the western world is far too quick to tear down and build new. Ribbit Homes is developing a strong reputation for restoration. ➤



Activity in front of Juliet and Mike's house was of interest to the neighbourhood as the project progressed.



Preserving History, One Basement at a Time

"I prefer working on old homes," he says. "They have more life, more character, and are more interesting than a new build for me." He's happy when he comes across like-minded homeowners.

Christoph has guided two home-raising projects and worked extensively on others in a particular Nutana neighbourhood, all within a stone's throw of each other. When one was complete, he literally moved his equipment a few feet to the next job. Each begins with a thorough analysis of possibilities, a structural assessment, cost-analysis, and some head scratching by the homeowner.

"Juliet and Mike are a great example of people who understand the value of renovating an old house, and that value isn't just in dollars and cents," Christoph insists. "The energy you feel in a home is from decades of history, people living their lives, loving, raising children.

A new foundation will cost, but what you love about the house is part of its value. You can't recreate that in a new house."

"A number of friends have been through this process, so we felt fairly confident," says Juliet.

Besides, Mike adds, "if we tore it down to put up a modern infill, Juliet's mom would have murdered us!"

Peggy Sarjeant is a well-known heritage activist in Saskatoon. Juliet and Mike are also proponents of maintaining character and believe infills should be sympathetic to the neighbourhood.

Onwards and Upwards

"Be clear about why you'd like to lift the house," says Christoph. "If your foundation is fine and you don't need more space, or if you plan to move soon, there's really no need." However, if a homeowner loves the house and neighbourhood, but the foundation is compromised, then the choice is clearer.





Christoph advises not to skimp on new foundation construction and recommends insulated concrete forms (ICF).

Civil engineers will provide a complete picture. In Juliet and Mike's case, the foundation had cracks wide enough to see daylight.

Each project is unique, but a "reasonable house about 1,000 square feet will be around \$100,000 to lift, do a new basement, put the house back down, disconnect and reconnect services. That's no finishing work. If you want to talk whole picture, start at \$200,000. It's a big investment."

What Goes Up... Will Stay There Awhile

"Our house looked strange up on those little towers. For awhile it seemed like nothing was happening," says Mike. "But there are a million jobs to do before the house is actually raised. A little daunting, but it's been fascinating."

Juliet and Mike's house was up on "towers" for about six weeks and drew a lot of neighbourhood attention. It looks a little hair-raising for people who haven't seen the process close up. There's a

lot of prep work, including cutting the house away from its foundation.

"The actual lift is very silent, slow and boring," Christoph explains. "It follows a lot of work to put beams under and build towers." One centralized hydraulic pump operates all the jacks at once, one millimetre at a time. It's a lot more advanced than a bunch of guys with jacks and crowbars," he laughs. "You have to adjust meticulously. It looks a little scary, but it's mundane for us."

The house is perched atop 6'x6' wood towers, which look small but are built for strength. Still in a heavy wind, the house can move.

"It's a little eerie to be working underneath when you hear a bit of creaking, but that's when you're most confident that the job has been done right."

More Space Big Time

Juliet and Mike's original house was 1,305 square feet on the main and second floor. The new basement has an ➤

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extended footprint in the front and at the back, adding another 1,000 square feet of space. They now have nine and eight foot ceilings. At the suggestion of friend Mark Bobyn, they put in large window wells for lots of natural light.

Some Surprises, Some Guarantees

"Depending on the house, we have to put in new beams because sometimes you run into floor joists that look like bananas," Christoph says. "But if a old house has been well maintained and has a sound roof, that makes a huge difference."

Old houses have their own charm and quirks. A new foundation will be completely level, so reintroducing the old to the new can cause some strain. The potential for window breaks is low, but possible. Some cracks in plaster is to be expected, but if the company

doing the lift is good at what they do, it should be minimal. Neufeld Building Movers has been around a long time and helped on this lift. Kerry Neufeld and his team know what they're doing."

Staying Grounded

"When it came down to it," says Mike, "we knew the problems in this house because we'd lived in it for 13 years. We'd already done the renos to make it our own. If you move and buy another old house, the kind we love, you start over discovering the problems you have to deal with."

Juliet agrees. "The reality is it's an expensive undertaking for sure. But we really wanted to stay in this neighbourhood. We still have the house we love. It's just that much better." (H)

Karin Melberg Schwier

CHRISTOPH'S TOP CONSIDERATIONS

1. Do the math. Determine whether the investment is simply financial or is there also emotional value. Are you going to stay in the house? Do you love the neighbourhood? If you're going to sell, it might not be worth the undertaking.
2. Do an analysis first and have a good design plan for the entire project. Will you add bedrooms, another bathroom? Do a proper structural assessment.
3. Do you want to do it all at once or in stages? Do you want to keep the character consistent if you're adding new areas?
4. Find a trustworthy general contractor to oversee the whole project. Unless you're a homeowner who can manage fulltime, find someone who can do the job.
5. Do your homework. Work with your contractor to find a reputable company with lots of experience lifting houses.
6. Don't skimp on the new foundation. Use ICF (insulated concrete forms). Similar to Lego blocks, the concrete is poured inside. With new national energy efficiencies coming into effect in 2019, the standard 2'x6' walls with R20 insulation will no longer be code. Learn about the new rules.



The towers may look spindly, but are built for strength and stability.



Juliet and Mike's house is back down on its new foundation, waiting for spring touchups.

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FIGHTING FOR HOME OWNERSHIP

THE CHALLENGES FACING NEW HOME BUYERS

 JULIE BARNES

When it comes to housing affordability across the country, Saskatoon lands somewhere in the middle. It's no surprise that home ownership here is not as out of reach as it is in Vancouver, Toronto and Victoria, but we're currently less affordable than Winnipeg, Halifax, Quebec City, Regina and even Edmonton, according to a 2018 report from the Royal Bank of Canada.

"When you look at the

average price of a home in the last 10 years, it's gone from about \$150,000 to \$350,000," says Barb Cox-Lloyd, CEO of Habitat for Humanity Saskatoon. "It's not possible for somebody who is making even \$70,000 a year to get a commercial mortgage on that—unless you get a really good deal or you've got an angel who will help you with a down payment."

Barb says that between

2009 and 2013, Saskatoon saw a 100 per cent increase in the average price of a home, "and in that time period we had about an eight per cent increase in average wages." She adds that although the market has softened in the last two years, housing prices haven't dropped significantly and they're certainly not back to their 2008 levels. "We are no longer considered a place that has great affordability."

Benefits of Ownership

Habitat Saskatoon's purpose is to "provide the opportunity for ownership to low-income families in Saskatoon who can't afford a traditional mortgage, but are looking to get into home ownership," says Barb. "We bring the community together to help families build strength, stability and independence through affordable home ownership."

The non-profit organization provides no-interest mortgages to the families they work with, and mortgage payments are indexed to 25 per cent of their household income. The families invest 500 hours of sweat equity in lieu of a down payment.

"What we offer them is the opportunity to pay less for their housing costs," says Barb. "Twenty-five per cent of their income (put towards their mortgage payments) gives them the freedom to pay all their utilities every month because a lot of people have to pick and choose. 'Do I pay my electrical or my gas this month?'"

Habitat Saskatoon focuses on families with children, because that's where the greatest impact lies, says Barb. She notes a Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) study that indicated children who live in a home owned by their parents have improved health and educational outcomes and a more stable life overall.

"When we turn the key over to a family, very often the kids are so excited because they've picked their room. We always paint them what we call 'Habitat White' but their parents have said they can paint their room whatever colour they want—and they have these wild dreams of what colour they're going to paint them," says Barb.

She and other Habitat CEOs across the country have heard the kids talk excitedly about sleepovers. "You know how important it is to a child to have a sleepover and it's amazing how many kids say, 'Now I can have my friends over because I have my own room.'" Up to that point, they may have been sharing a bedroom with siblings or sleeping in

the living room due to lack of space, she says. "They can feel proud of having their friends over to their own home—not enough can be said about the importance of that for a child."

First-time Homebuyers

First-time homebuyers are particularly affected by the high cost of home ownership in Saskatoon, says Shaun Dyck, executive director of Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP). "For young families and first-time homebuyers, the prices are very high and the more affordable choice they have right now is the condominium market," he says. "That can be helpful to build up assets, but there is a large inventory of condominiums in Saskatoon, which can make it difficult to sell after a time."

Shaun says it's important to consider how much debt potential buyers are willing to take on. "Canada has a lot of people who are in

debt right now. The average household debt is about 170 per cent of income. That's a huge debt load and sometimes purchasing a home isn't the best investment." Although there's a drive towards ownership, it might be worth continuing to rent and saving up for a 20 per cent down payment rather than "jumping in the market and just putting that bare five per cent down," he says.

Hidden Costs

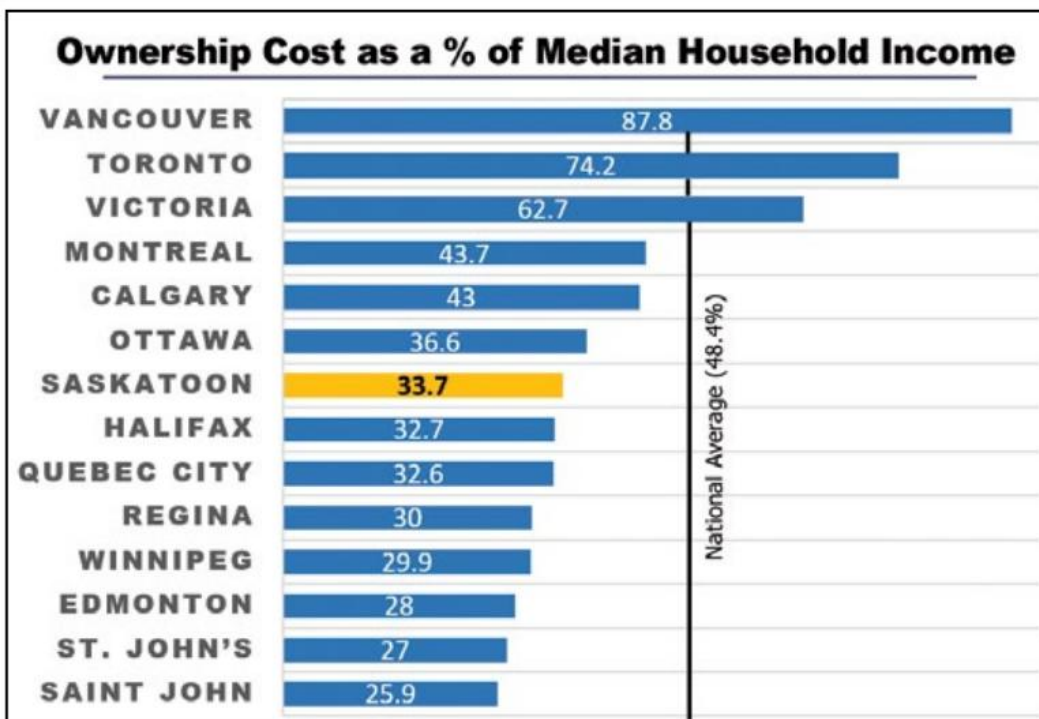
One factor that impacts affordability is often overlooked, says Shaun. "The further you are from work—if you work downtown and you live in the outskirts of the city—it's going to cost you more," he says. "Look at other ways, other than just the mortgage price to decrease your actual cost," he adds. The costs of car ownership are high, so if you can live closer to work and walk, cycle or take advantage of public

transit instead of depending on your own set of wheels, it's worth exploring.

Shared Equity Model

Shaun has seen successful affordable housing initiatives in other Canadian cities that could be implemented here in Saskatoon.

"There's an interesting one in Calgary where they're doing shared equity," he says. With shared equity, the developer decreases the cost of home ownership by selling just the house and maintaining ownership of the land it sits on. "As an example, if your land value is one-third, say \$100,000, and the house is built for \$200,000, for a \$300,000 home you take one-third out of that price for land and it makes it a lot more affordable," says Shaun. Shared equity program terms can vary, but in the case Shaun is familiar with, after 10 years of ownership, the homeowner can purchase the land and roll the cost into ➤



Source: RBC Housing Trends and Affordability Report - July 2018

their mortgage. "Over time, you can own your house and the land it sits on."

Support Program

Paul Whitenect, Manager of Neighbourhood Planning with the City of Saskatoon, says attainable housing is a necessary foundation for building a healthy and economically viable community. One initiative the City has in place is the Mortgage Flexibilities Support Program.

The program provides a five per cent down payment grant from the City to qualified homebuyers who meet the maximum household income limits (see sidebar for details).

Homebuyers must purchase a home from designated projects, listed on the City's website, and the grant does not have to be repaid.

This program "has provided down payment grants to assist over 700 Saskatoon families with moderate income to achieve homeownership since its inception in 2008," says Paul.

Stress Test

The mortgage stress test, rolled out nationally last year, is a risk management tool that ensures homeowners can afford their home should interest rates rise. But it's had an impact on those who may have once qualified for the City's down payment grant, says Shaun.

"Because of the stress test, buyers can't get to that point of being able to get a mortgage, and if they do, they don't necessarily qualify anymore for the down payment grant, so it's a tough place to be right now," he says. "It still works for a few people but it's not being utilized as it used to be."

If there's any silver lining, Shaun says at the end of 2018, housing became slightly more affordable in Saskatoon and "median incomes have risen the fastest over the last five years in Saskatchewan—the fastest of any province in the country." (H)

Julie Barnes

CITY OF SASKATOON MORTGAGE FLEXIBILITIES SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Mortgage Flexibilities Support Program provides a 5 per cent down payment grant from the City of Saskatoon to qualified homebuyers who meet the maximum household income limits. Homebuyers must purchase a home from designated projects, listed on the City's website, and the grant does not have to be repaid.

Total household income of the buyer must fall within the maximum limits outlined below. Income limits vary by size of household, as seen below:

- One Person: \$69,975
- Two Persons: \$74,640
- One dependent: \$79,305
- Two dependents: \$83,970
- Three or more dependents: \$88,635

Households maximum net worth limit: \$25,000

Visit www.saskatoon.ca/services-residents/housing-property/incentives-homebuyers for more information about how to qualify.



CURIOSITIES REVEALED

TREASURES IN THE WALLS



KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER

Buried treasure. It's always a thrill to unearth something valuable, interesting or just plain weird that has been left behind or hidden by a previous homeowner. One of *Saskatoon HOME's* most popular articles (Fall 2017) touched a chord with many readers. "InThese Walls: Reno History Mysteries

and Hidden Secrets" revealed several such treasures and readers were prompted to share their stories.

Finding What Lurks Beneath

Newspapers in the early 1900s provided common insulation in walls, and decades later provide

fascinating reading material to renovators and homeowners who sometimes frame the media as art. Bits of building material wrapping and old postcards drop down in between studs for want of a garbage can. A ring is lost and passes beyond knowledge. Paper dolls, coins, diaries, and

tiny toys slip down furnace vents and cold air returns, lost by children who have since grown old.

Since "InTheseWalls" was published, readers have been eager to share their stories with us, and we've unearthed even more secrets.

THE ARCHAEOLOGIST AND THE ROOM UNDER THE STAIRS

"When we bought our 1911 house, I never imagined using my anthropology/archaeology degree in our renovations. But I quickly realized the spaces behind the fireplace mantel, radiators, baseboards, and trim were treasure troves of little finds," says Katie Menzies of the house she and husband Lester Martens bought in 2010. As renovations progressed, all work would come to halt when baseboards were removed so Katie could search in the cracks with a nail to gently scrape away the dust. Not the most sophisticated archaeology tool, but it worked well enough to unearth a few special finds: a 1886 post card; 1927 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs ticket; 1931 *Star Phoenix* receipt; milk delivery tickets; a Red Horner hockey card; Chiclet 1910 bird series collecting cards; two lockets. "One must have fallen from the third floor, as it was hanging between joists on the second storey when the flooring was exposed." Stamps from various European countries; several coins. "The oldest was from 1901, and one was found inside the keyhole of the bathroom door."

A Hudson Bay Company invitation to a private showing of intimate garments, several Christmas cards, and an Effie Deans trading card from 1877.

"There is also a space under the stairs to the second storey. We call it the Harry Potter Room," says Katie. "People, mostly children, over the years have written notes, dated and signed their names inside. The oldest autograph is from 1935.

There remains one section of original baseboard in her eldest son's bedroom that has not been removed yet. Nail at the ready, she says, "I am ever so curious to see if there's a gold mine behind it." ➤



Katie Menzies examines some of her home's historic finds with sons Alexander, left, and Andrew.



LEAD SOLDIERS, A SET OF CHOMPERS, A DIAMOND, AND GOLD

Meg Gerwing has been lovingly restoring her 1930 Spanish Revival style house since she bought it in 2004.

"I love the idea of finding treasures and I have a small collection from the house and things unearthed when I turn over the garden," she says. Her first "thrilling find" was a pair of very detailed lead World War I toy British infantry soliders. They are a part of an original set of 36 made in Great Britain, probably around 1916 or 1917. The prone machine gunner is very rare, said an appraiser. The soldiers joined a few glass marbles, bits of glass and crockery, a plastic army man, and a thimble.

The oddest find is the uppers of a miniature set of dentures, too articulated to be a toy, but seemingly too small for dental study. Meg found a "very useful brass manicure tool behind the radiator." Possibly the most valuable discovery was a humble diamond engagement ring, a slender band worn down to a hair's breadth. "It was wedged behind a baseboard, but alas no love letters to go with it."

Made in Great Britain, lead WWI British infantry soldiers in pristine condition are part of a collection of trinkets, including the uppers of a tiny set of dentures.

SCHOOL GAZE

The current owners of a 1923-era house finally surrendered themselves to a kitchen renovation. The old fir kitchen cupboards were crowbarred off the walls. In the lath and plaster debris, there were a few pencils, paper clips, a Kodachrome slide, and a small faded colour school photo of a little girl. Combed and curled for picture day, she looked out from behind cat-eye glasses.

Nadine Sugden, 59, from British Columbia was passing through Saskatoon in 2018 with her daughter Sadie and a friend, and wanted to show them her childhood home in Nutana. The homeowners welcomed her in – as they had her brother Randall the year before – and brought out a collection of things found in the walls during the renovation, including the school photo. It was Nadine in grade five at Brunskill School, circa 1970.

"Mom used to dress me and my younger sister Inver Lea in identical clothes and put our hair in ringlets for picture day," Nadine recalls. "I'm happy the current homeowners got to meet the little girl in the picture in person – me – all these years later."



When Nadine Sugden returned to her childhood home, she was reunited with a version of her 10-year-old self.



STILL HIDDEN

The late Gale Parchoma recently reminisced about living in a small rented farmstead house with her first husband. There was no running water in the barn where they set up a pen for a farrowing sow, so Gale had to haul buckets from the cistern. The sow wasn't happy with the arrangement either.

"In preparation for her big day, she spent time redecorating her pen with her tusks and a lot of adrenaline. She fancied a distressed look of half-chewed sideboards with lots of splinters. On the evening before delivery, she settled down into a heap of straw and rubbish, and we noticed a long pipe sticking out. I asked my husband where on earth she had managed to find a pipe and why. He had no idea." Later when the sow had weaned her brood, Gale and her husband went in to clean and repair the pen.

"Under what had been her birthing nest was a trap door in the floor that had been nailed down for many years. Now the chewed up edge of one corner was gone and the pipe was sticking out of it. My husband pried up what was left of the door and we followed a tangle of pipes to reveal a secret moonshine still. My husband said of the previous owner, 'Seems the old guy had his office pretty close to home.'"



Sometimes it takes adrenaline-fueled pig power to do the demo it takes to uncover a property's buried secret.

PETRIFIED CHEESE WITH A SIDE OF CASH

When Jenifer Downer bought her 11th Street East character home in 1993, she made a list of a few things to do to bring back some original 1927 charm.

She pulled up carpets to expose the hardwood. In the bathroom, she kept her hopes up that the tub surround would expose a clawfoot. As she pried off the oddly-built plaster and chicken wire enclosure, she was happy to discover it did. Underneath was a small brown lunch bag containing a petrified cheese sandwich and empty sardine tin, entombed by the worker who built the surround.

When Jenifer removed the plywood sink cabinet, she noticed a bit of paper tucked up underneath. She pried out an envelope. Inside she discovered three \$100 bills. Rather than putting the windfall toward bathroom reno, Jenifer tracked down the elderly woman from whom she bought the house.

"The woman, probably in her late 70s then, arrived at the door," says Jenifer. "I sort of expected her to be a little effusive about getting her stash back. I would have been! Instead, she held out her hand, took the envelope, said thanks, and was gone." Jenifer did keep a careful watch out for other stashes as she worked on the house, but to no avail. And no more stiff cheese sandwiches. ➤



Jenifer Downer found lunch and just a little extra when renovating the bathroom of her 1927 home.

LUCK ON THEIR SIDE



Adam Gartner and Trista Olszewski own Iron Ring Developments, and have restored several old homes, transforming them into desirable income properties. That has involved some extensive renovations, and they've uncovered a few objects worth keeping: a long overdue Greystone Heights library book called *Marijuana: Time for a Closer Look* published in 1980. It was hidden between floor joists, presumably by someone doing some surreptitious research. A glass vase in a false cabinet at their own house on Hazen Street is a favourite.

But the most unusual was uncovered as they began a reno on a 1923 brick house on 11th Street East. A heavy 100-year-old concrete slab had to be broken up in order to properly lay a new floor. After

several attempts to break it up with a 10-pound sledge, they finally made headway. As the chunks finally broke free, an unusual element was uncovered.

"There were hundreds of horse shoes all laid out like fish scale," she says. Adam believes it was done to reinforce the floor under an old cast iron wood cook stove. There were clay tiles laid over the concrete. The shoes are in various sizes. "It was their version of rebar. People were into recycle, reuse, repurpose a long time ago!" One chunk with shoes that couldn't be pulled out of the concrete serves as a garden sculpture. Trista says opinions about hanging a horseshoe are split. "Some say up so the luck doesn't fall out. Others say down so the luck runs down over you. So we're good either way!"

Trista and Adam come across various finds as they renovate income properties. The keepers include a glass vase and a book extolling the dangers of marijuana use for teens in the 1980s. But the strangest was a collection of hundreds of horseshoes.

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Why two very rare WWI trench phones built by British Post Office Telephones in 1918 were sealed up inside the wall of a Rosetown farmhouse, no one knows.

Chatting out on the battlefield during World War I wasn't just a matter of British army officers texting on cell phones. Orest and Marion Murawsky have two perfectly preserved 1918 WWI trench phones made by British Post Office Telephones. When a Rosetown farmhouse was demolished, this pristine pair of trench phones was revealed, hidden in the wall. A very rare find, the

only others Orest has been able to track down are in the Museum of Technology in London, England. The phones were used to communicate to comrades in the trenches, but worked only if there was a connecting wire from one to another a distance away.

"How they didn't get shot stringing that wire is the real mystery," says Orest. "Or maybe they did." (i)

If you have an interesting find you'd like to share with *HOME*, email info@saskatoon-home.ca and include a few details, a photo if you have one and your contact information. We'll share our favourites on social media.

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HOME FOOD: MEAD

 CRAIG SILLIPHANT

When the flowers bloom in spring, we start to see bees. In fact, spring is the start of beekeeping season, which means honey production. Honey production means the time is nigh for making the delicious nectar of the gods that is mead. You knew I was

going somewhere with this, didn't you?

Mead is an alcoholic drink made with fermented honey and water, and often with other fruits, spices, grains, or hops for flavour and texture. While it has fallen behind beer and wine in terms of

popularity in the modern world, mead has an ancient and storied saga.

It was produced throughout ancient history in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Pottery from as far back as 7000 BC have shown chemical signatures that suggest

mead production. Mead has even played an important part in some mythologies, like the Nordic gods, and it was said to be the go-to drink in ancient Greece. It was featured in Germanic myths like *Beowulf*, and you'll see it mentioned these days in ➤



pop culture that draws from those times—you’ve probably seen it showing up in *Harry Potter* and *Game of Thrones*.

I met up with Aaron Brown, an avid brewer of beer, wine, and everything in between. For the last few years, Aaron has been making mead, and has even won a few awards. He started his home brewing by making cider because his friend had an apple tree. It eventually occurred to him that he also had a friend who made honey, so he decided to try his hand at mead. He

has a lot of equipment, but mead doesn’t require a lot of gear.

“The nice thing about making mead,” he says, “is that it’s not that expensive.”

We set up in Aaron’s kitchen and he walks me through the steps. He starts with sanitized equipment and adds honey and water together in a pot until the honey is dissolved.

“It’s okay to heat the mixture to help dissolve the honey,” he explains, “but try and keep it below 35 degrees Celsius.”

After allowing the mixture to cool to room temperature, Aaron pours it into a carboy (which is basically a big jug; it’s what you’re going to ferment the mead in). He then uses a hydrometer to see how much sugar there is, and what fermentation is happening, even what the alcohol content is. Most mead is a pretty high percentage, 10 to 20 per cent, but Aaron has been making his a bit lower so you can enjoy a nice full glass of it instead of just a wee nip.

“Some people want to make rocket fuel, more like wine,” he says. “Lately I’ve been trying to make stuff with a little lower alcohol. More like a higher beer strength, like six per cent. Though, you can only go so low or you start to lose some of the honey character because it’s so delicate.”

Once you’re satisfied with the balance of water and sugar content, you add the yeast. Beer has nutrients, but mead is just honey sugar. In order to keep yeast healthy



during fermentation, you need to add nitrogen. Aaron shows me a package of beer yeast from Paddockwood Brewery, which contains those necessary nutrients.

"It's called a smack pack," he says, giving the package of yeast a whack. "You just hit it with your hand. It gives your yeast a little feeding. If your yeast is going in a little happier, it's going to be a good situation. If you don't, it's going to struggle. And it perpetuates the myth that mead takes forever to make. In the old days, you'd just go water, honey, yeast, and the yeast would struggle. But now, instead of waiting a year, you can make a batch in a month or so."

There are a few more maintenance steps and details, which you can see in the recipe that we've

included. One of the most important points that Aaron makes, though, is to resist the urge to skimp on the ingredients, especially the honey, and especially in Saskatchewan, a hotbed of honey production.

"Good ingredients make it," says Aaron. "You don't just want to go to the store and buy the cheapest honey you can find because it'll taste...well, cheap."

Speaking of flavour, one of the reasons Aaron likes mead is because he's got a lot of ideas for flavours and mead is a great vehicle for that. Not only are there different blends of honey, from wildflower to dandelion or delicate canola honey, you can also add fruit or spices, or even caramelize the honey, which gives it notes of toasted marshmallow. ➤



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Since we have a month to wait for our batch, we try a couple of the award-winning meads that Aaron has on hand. One is a sweet, almost dessert wine, made with apple juice instead of water. He's added spices like cinnamon and ginger, which makes it taste like apple pie. I take a sip, and I can't believe what I'm tasting. Grandma's apple pie—and booze.

We try a second batch, in which he caramelized the honey and aged it on

whiskey-soaked oak cubes to simulate a whisky barrel. It has a dark brown colour and tastes a bit like toasted marshmallow. But it's also like the smoothest bourbon you've ever had with all the flavour of bourbon, but none of the bite.

"See?" he asks, as we clink glasses before a sip. "Super simple." 

Craig Silliphant



STANDARD MEAD RECIPE

1.85 kg wildflower honey
10.1 L filtered water
1 package yeast (1084 Irish Ale or ImperialYeast A10 Darkness).
5.6 g Fermaid-O (a type of yeast nutrient).
If unavailable, 2.8 g of Fermaid-K can be substituted.

Mix honey and water together until dissolved, and add to carboy or bucket. If heated, keep it below 35°C.

Allow mixture to cool to room temperature, check gravity with hydrometer (should read about 1.050). Add yeast as per package instructions. Ferment at 17-21°C, and vigorously stir/shake twice daily for the first week to remove excess CO2 (called, 'degassing'). Careful, as it will foam up.

One day after adding yeast, add 1.4 g Fermaid-O, and again on days two, three and seven. Before adding nutrient, degas to avoid excess foaming. Stir or swirl mixture until fully combined.

After three weeks, fermentation should be complete. Check with hydrometer, which should read 1.000 or less. If possible, transfer to a second carboy ensuring you leave any sediment behind, and allow to sit for another week in a cool location to further clear.

Bottle and enjoy!



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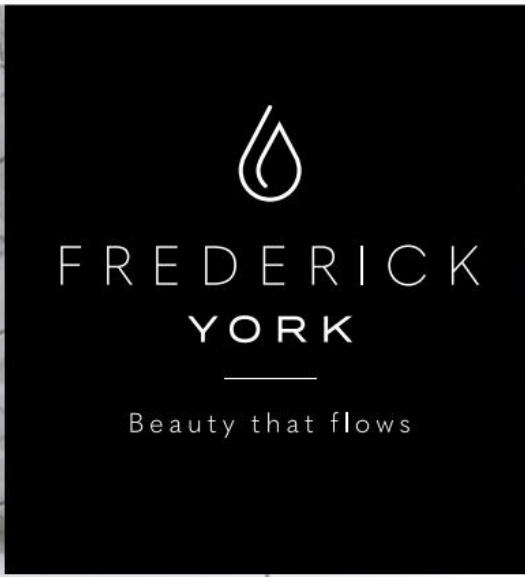


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HOMEtown Reflections

 JEFF O'BRIEN

THE HISTORY OF KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Photo Credit : Local History Room – Saskatoon Public Library - A 714

Household appliances, loosely defined, are machines used to make household tasks easier. While the first recognizably-modern appliances started appearing in the early 1900s, things really took off in Canada after the Second World War as upwardly-mobile families filled their houses with the latest in labour-saving devices.

It's not an overstatement to say that such devices have

revolutionized the way we in Saskatoon live.

Hearth and Home

At its simplest, the hearth is a ring of stones with a fire in it. For most of human history (including today, in a great many places) some variation of this was how most people cooked their food and heated their homes. The use of fire goes back a long way. Indeed, *Homo erectus* may have been

eating cooked food as much as 1.8 million years ago, although if so, it would have been things cooked accidentally, in naturally occurring fires. The systematic, deliberate use of fire by early humans came much later, along with the first home appliances: the pointy stick and the flat rock.

When people moved indoors they brought their fires with them. Maybe there was a hole in the roof for ventilation,

maybe there wasn't. Either way, smoke and soot were constant companions, even when people started moving the fire pit to the side and adding a chimney.

But cooking over an open fire was always dangerous. Even with raised hearths, long-handled tools and pot hooks that swung out away from the flames, women in long dresses ran a terrible risk of death and injury. The solution to this – one

that also simplified cooking and home heating and did much to eliminate the smoke and soot problem – was the enclosed stove.

Stoves made of brick and tile – three-sided, with a top and open front to feed the fire – have been found in China dating back more than 2000 years. The sealed, cast-iron stove is only a couple hundred years old, and in Saskatoon, such a stove, with a metal flue pipe and a door in front to control airflow, was at the top of the ‘must have’ list for every Temperance Colony homemaker.

Cooking with Gas

Gas ranges for homes first appeared in the cities of Europe and North America in the 19th century. Stoves fuelled by kerosene and gasoline were very common throughout the first half of the 20th century,

including in Saskatoon, where they feature prominently in fire department annual reports over the years. The electric range with all its many variations began gaining in popularity in the 1930s, while the microwave oven, a boon to leftover-eaters and popcorn makers the world over, was invented more or less by accident in 1945 and started appearing in Saskatoon homes in the 1970s.

The Iceman Cometh

Not surprisingly, a lot of thought has gone into how to keep food from spoiling.

Historically, meat has been dried, smoked (often simply by hanging it in the chimney), dry salted and pickled. Homemakers dried fruit over the stove, while meat, fruits and vegetables have been canned, pickled, bottled, and turned into jams, jellies and sauces. Dried pasta, which ➤

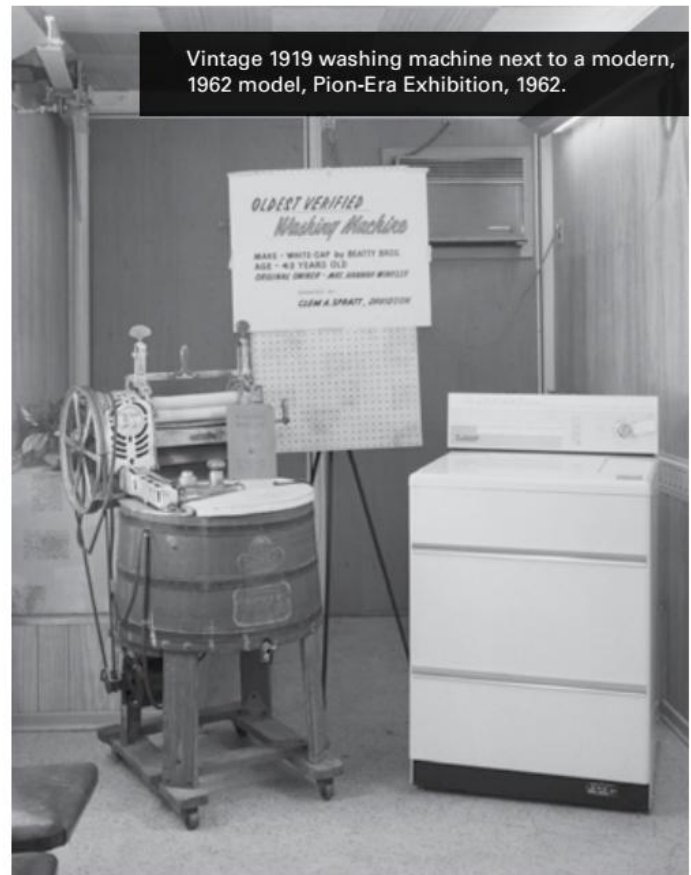


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lasts practically forever, was apparently carried on Italian ships making long voyages beginning in the 14th and 15th centuries. And don't forget fermentation, the 'friends with benefits' of food preservation technologies, which might be as old as humanity itself.

But to keep food fresh for day-to-day use, nothing beats keeping it cold. Ice is the old standby for this. For years, the Arctic Ice Company in Saskatoon harvested huge ice blocks off the river each winter, storing them in an insulated warehouse to sell to homes, restaurants and the railways. Prompted in part by concerns about silt and other contaminants in river ice, Arctic Ice eventually built an artificial ice plant. Electric refrigerators and freezers, which had first started appearing in homes in the 1920s and '30s, were replacing ice boxes in Saskatoon anyway, and the day of the door-to-door ice delivery was by then almost over.

Cleaning House

The time-honoured method of cleaning carpets is to hang

them out and beat them with a stick. This is great for working out resentment but very hard on the arms. Nineteenth-century human-powered vacuum cleaners, which used a bellows or a hand-cranked fan to create suction, were hardly an improvement, although an enterprising American named Bissell patented the first effective carpet sweeper in 1876. But the first modern,

electric vacuum cleaner, with rotating brushes to dislodge dirt and a motorized fan to suck it up, hit the market in 1908. This was followed in due course by the invention of the wall-to-wall shag carpet.

Laundry Day

Throughout history, the single most time-consuming household chore was doing the laundry. Originally – and

in many places still – doing laundry meant going down to the nearest river, getting everything soapy and wet, and then bashing it repeatedly against a rock before rinsing it off and wringing it out. This isn't much different from how modern washing machines work.

In turn-of-the-century Canadian households, washing was still hugely labour-intensive, involving

Home appliance display, Saskatoon Exhibition, 1949.



Photo Credit : Local History Room – Saskatoon Public Library - HST-214-024

Kitchen of the Ballantyne home, 1896.



Photo Credit: Library and Archives Canada

Refrigeration Engineering Co. store floor stock, 1952.



Photo Credit : Local History Room – Saskatoon Public Library - A 2846



Advertisement, 1949 Star Phoenix

much hauling and boiling of water, thumping with long paddles and scrubbing against washboards. Commercial bleaching agents have been available since the late 1900s, but for centuries, savvy housewives used a solution of aged human urine to get their whites whiter. Or, if you ran out, you could always hang your whites in the sunshine while you drank a glass of

something to rehydrate. The first fully automatic washing machines with distinct wash, rinse and spin cycles, didn't start hitting the market until the 1930s. Manual machines, which featured a wringer device on top for feeding the laundry through ("Watch your fingers!" your mother would shout), were very common in homes here until at least the 1960s. ➤



Mrs. Arthur Beale at home, early 1900s.

Photo Credit: Library and Archives Canada

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Simco Appliances, including a wooden icebox, at the Saskatoon Exhibition, ca. 1929.

Photo Credit : Local History Room – Saskatoon Public Library - A 387

Family lore abounds with tales of getting other things caught in the wringer.

The Wide World of Advertising

Advertising for household devices has always been aimed squarely at women. A *Macleans* magazine ad from 1946 shows a smiling young mother, sharply dressed in skirt, apron and high-heels, surrounded by a host of General Electric appliances designed

to “make short work of housework” in the all-electric home. A 1956 article about “the new gadgets you’ll soon be seeing at the stores” listed remote controlled TVs for watching in the bathtub, a bedside panel to allow “sleepy housewives” to turn on the stove, fire up the toaster and let the dog out, and – our personal favourite – a portable radio with built-in Geiger counter. *Popular Science* magazine ran

a series of “dream kitchen” articles in the 1950s that show women swooning over motorized cabinets, pop-up blenders, a flour dispenser with powered sifter, sinks with retractable ovens and, for the man of the house, a kitchen that doubled as a darkroom. Because, why not?

The Home of the Future

People have been predicting the rise of the automatic

house since about the time good help started getting hard to find. Invariably, these prognostications seem hopelessly quaint when viewed from the lofty heights of the present-day. Because really, nothing says ‘World of Tomorrow’ quite like getting an email from your fridge or doing online banking on your microwave.

As more aspects of daily life get wired into the ever-expanding internet, however, this may actually be changing. But until the day someone invents a robot that can put out the dog and change the baby without ever getting the two mixed up, we humans will continue to be responsible for most of the jobs that need to be done in even the most modern of homes. (H)

Jeff O'Brien



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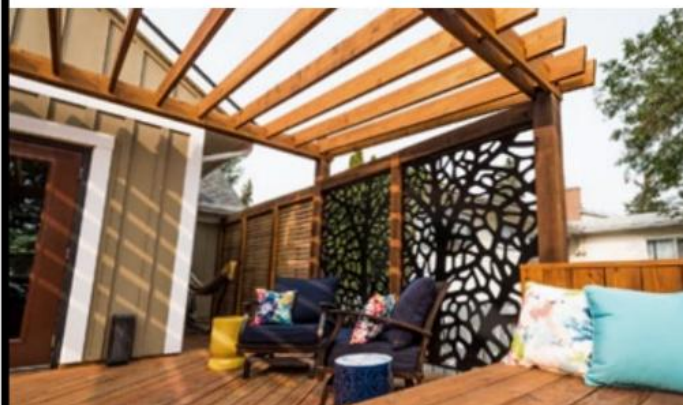


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DECLUTTERING

THE SWEDISH ART OF DEATH CLEANING

 JULIE BARNES

At first glance there is something incredibly awkward about asking your in-laws to read a book called *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*. But after reading it myself, I couldn't *not* suggest it to them. Especially after I read this part: "Many adult children worry about the amount of possessions their parents have amassed through the years. They know that if their parents

don't take care of their own stuff, they, the children, will have to do it for them."

At just over 100 pages, the book isn't a huge time commitment, and my in-laws graciously accepted the challenge—although my mother-in-law asked if there was an ulterior motive behind my request. There was.

My in-laws, Bev and Joe, have accumulated two large

houses-worth of possessions over their 43 years of marriage.

They have a home in the city and one at the lake, and they don't plan to downsize (real estate wise) anytime soon. So the line in the book about concerned adult children struck a chord.

The book's Swedish author, Margareta Magnusson, walks readers through several tips for paring back belongings, by

category, a la Marie Kondo, the Japanese phenom who has become an international font of decluttering advice. In fact, Margareta has been called "the Marie Kondo of death."

The objective is to avoid leaving a mess for others to clean up once you've kicked the bucket. As Margareta says, "Do not ever imagine that anyone will wish—or be able—to schedule time ➤



off to take care of what you didn't bother to take care of yourself. No matter how much they love you, don't leave this burden to them."

After Bev and Joe read the book, we sat down to chat about it as if we were hosting our own family book club.

The Throw Away Box

Bev's main takeaway was the concept of a "throw away box." The idea is to gather items that hold meaning for you—but won't mean anything to anyone else—and place them in a box labelled "throw away." Once you're gone, your family understands they can throw away the entire box guilt-free. The book's author placed old love letters, travel mementos and programs in her own such box.

Bev already had some items in mind for her future throw

away box and imagined what it would look like. "In my mind I was thinking a banker's box, but the author implies that it should be more like the size of a shoebox," she said. Joe chimed in, "I think you need something bigger than a banker's box." Followed up by my husband's two cents: "You need something the size of a refrigerator." I thought to myself that the two of them combined would require a "throw away" shipping container.

Paring Down Photos

Sentimental items like photos can be difficult to downsize, but Bev thought Margareta Magnusson had some helpful tips. "If she doesn't know the names of the people in the photo, she gets rid of it. I thought that was a really good idea," said



Bev. "If you don't recognize anybody in the photo, the next generation is not going to either."

Remember slide projectors? The author used a film scanner to convert her family's slides onto her computer. She then exported them to USB sticks and gave them to her children for Christmas.

Bev and Joe still have their projector and slides, which hold photos from early in their marriage. They plan to look at the photos together and then throw most of them out, says Bev. "We're not collecting more pictures now. We're trying to downsize so we wouldn't save any unless there was something with my dad and the kids, or something like that."

Books Be Gone

Bev also gleaned some

helpful insight on downsizing books. She paraphrased the author: "If you don't love the book and you never plan to read it again, why are you keeping it?" She thinks the concept of a beautiful bookshelf sparked the urge to collect, but now "everything is just jammed in there." She plans to go through her books and donate any excess to a book sale fundraiser.

Cookbooks are another story, she says. "I find it really difficult to part with my cookbooks. It may be sentimental about a time and age in our married life." The author suggests that giving away cookbooks is easier now that we can look up any recipe online. "She's right," says Bev, "I go online first, but if I don't like what I find, I'll say, 'Okay, where's that good recipe I had for meatloaf?'" ➤



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Attachment Challenges

Joe admits he owns a lot of tools, but finds it hard to part with them. He's held onto his late father's and late uncle's old toolboxes. "I open the case once a year to look inside and that's it. It's time to get rid of them."

Bev is a talented quilter. She could open her own shop with the amount of fabric she has. She uses it to make charity quilts and has given some away, but says, "I have a hard time parting with it. I'm attached to it personally." She has a quilting room at her house in the city where she keeps her supplies. "I have the room to store it, so I'm not forced to make that decision."

Generational Divides

My in-laws are in their mid 60s, while I'm in my late 30s. Their generation registered for

china place settings when they got married and purchased elaborate cabinets to contain them. My generation has done away with dining rooms altogether. Most of my friends err on the side of minimalism.

Despite the differences in the way we view possessions, it was helpful to discuss where they'd like their belongings to end up. They'd like to donate most of it to charitable causes over time.

My final question was whether they felt it was cheeky of me to suggest the book in the first place. "I actually feel pretty good that you're comfortable enough to ask," said Bev. "Our relationship is pretty good, I think, by the fact that we can openly talk about it." (H)

Julie Barnes

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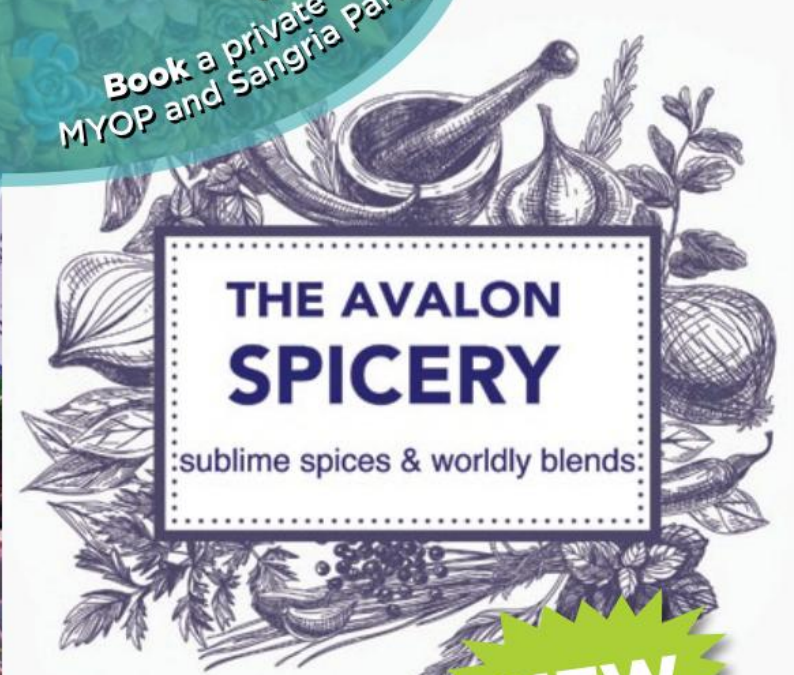
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